

2007 Summer Institute Convener Reflection

Every summer the SAMSHA MFP fellows are given the opportunity to convene with each other, share their expertise and experiences and gain access to the insight of world renowned experts and scientist that play a major role in addressing health disparities among minority populations. Embedding in these “intensive” institutes are opportunities to learn and apply rigorous research and statistical methods, access the expertise of more seasoned researchers, reflect over the practical applications of research and encounter numerous opportunities to participate in dialogue with current and former fellows about their research and professional and cultural experiences. This year’s summer institute was particularly special for me. Being held near our nation’s capital, the 2007 Summer Institute presented me and the other fellow with the unique opportunity to listen to guest speakers that play a major role in the health of our nation, to visit with our house representatives and to take field trips to the American Indian Museum and other important buildings in the D.C. mall. The setting set the stage for not only to continue to grow as researcher, but to also understand how our work can have an impact on a political and practical level.

I was the convener of our first dinner together and had the pleasure of presenting the evening’s guest speaker, Dr. Gladys Gary Vaughn. Dr. Gary Vaughn is a senior administrator at the United States Department of Agriculture. She spoke to us about the opportunities she had to serve on numerous organizational boards and leadership positions in world-renowned organizations such as Habitat for Humanity, Links, Inc. and the United Nations Children’s Fund. In addition to describing the potential contribution one can provide by serving on these boards, she stressed the importance of taking a board position seriously and being committed to the organization. She illustrated this through numerous examples in where she had to put her life on pause in order to travel abroad or attend important meetings and examples of dedicating a great deal of time and energy to support the organization she was serving at the time. Dr. Gary Vaughn’s presentation of

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her service, her passion for her work and her life experiences were both inspiring and motivating.

The other guest speakers and experiences that the 2007 Summer Institute presented the fellows with were equally motivating. The next day we had the opportunity to receive a briefing from the ANA (Rose Gonzalez) and visit our house representatives. This very daunting visit with Ileana Ross-Lehtinan (my district representative) went far better than I ever expected. I had the opportunity to discuss important health issues for Hispanics in my community and share some of the contributions that not only SAMSHA and the ANA were working on, but also about contributions that I hoped to make throughout my career trajectory. This meeting helped me understand how health policies and consequently the health of our nation can be shaped and gave me the confidence to play a more active role in this political process.

Upon our return from the congressional visits, we had the opportunity to listen to Dr. Kyu Rhee, the Chief Medical Officer of Baltimore Medical Systems. Hearing him speak was one of the highlights of the summer institute for me. His charisma and passion for providing frontline care to minorities and other vulnerable populations were informative and stimulating. I particularly enjoyed our discussion about the often opposing roles between researchers and practitioners. This discussion helped me understand ways in which research can be conducted in order to more effectively work alongside practice. This discussion also reinforced my desire to conduct research within the community and the importance of creating true partnerships with the stakeholders and community members themselves. The following evening we also had the opportunity to listen to Dr. Kem Louie talk about the role of ethnic minorities in nursing. Her presentation emphasized the shortage of ethnic minorities in nursing and the importance that having a workforce that resembled the patient population played in addressing health disparities. This helped reinforce the potential role that we can play in addressing the shortage of ethnic minority nurses and health disparities as emerging nursing leaders and scientists.

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The visits to the U.S. capitol, the American Indian Museum and the Library of Congress were also a very meaningful experience for me. What made these experiences so memorable for me was the opportunity to share them with the other fellows, Linda Stierle, the CEO of the ANA, and the key personnel of the SAMSHA MFP. The interactions I had with others while touring these buildings and museums and our reflections opened my eyes to the experiences that others from different ethnic groups faced in the past and present. This helped me develop a deeper understanding of how racism, intolerance and ignorance about cultures other than ones own perpetuate health disparities and the importance that cultural exchanges can serve in eliminating these.

After being inspired by the guest speakers, visits to congress and other important buildings in the D.C. mall, and the cultural exchanges, Dr. Yarandi taught us how to utilize AMOS, a statistical package that assists in structural equation modeling, in our own research. This was particularly helpful for me because it helped me better conceptualize the analysis that I will need to conduct for my dissertation. As with the other summer institutes, the research and statistic lectures that we participate in allows us to not only “hear about” methods, but also apply them in real time throughout the lecture.

Every time I attend an MFP institute I feel that I grow tremendously as a researcher. This could not be possible without the support of SAMSHA, ANA, Janet Jackson and Dr. Gary. Their belief in us, their constant encouragement, the opportunities for learning they present us with and their inspiration are fundamental to our growth as scholars and professionals. Thank you for hosting the 2007 ISI and the constant support that you give us!

Michelle Hampton
Aug 22, 2007

The ISI, and what I've appreciated most about it

1. The practical benefit of learning to use and understand software products to support our work
2. Repetition of statistical concepts that bring greater understanding and retention
3. I like the intensity and pace of the work. I always feel like it gives me momentum to go home and continue to work intensely. I always find myself jotting notes to myself that I get inspired by when I hear a speaker or get an idea for something, something to follow-up on
4. Being a more reserved person, the frequency of the ISI has helped me to get to know other fellows better and feel more a part of the group, which I really value
5. The speakers are always excellent, inspirational, knowledgeable. They make me feel that I have a lot of options, things I might never have considered
6. In Washington, D.C. I was awestruck by the resources available at the library of Congress. I had heard of it before, but never realized what was available there

This is all I can think of for now. I hope that you'll be with the program for a long time. You've done such a beautiful job with it. I hope that you have a moment to read the acknowledgement I wrote to you, Dr. Yarandi, Janet, and the MFP program in my dissertation.

Aimee Erb
September 03, 2007

Highlights from the Summer Institute in Silver Spring, MD

- ANA presented an excellent presentation on how to address U.S. Representatives and their staff when discussing proposed legislation.
- MFP fellows learned how lobbying occurs as we met with a legislative assistant from the office of Rep. Earl Pomeroy (D-North Dakota).
- MFP fellows learned how to utilize the Amos statistical package presented by Dr. Yarandi, PhD at ANA headquarters.
- Dr. Linda Stierle, CEO from ANA spoke about how the organization supports lobbying efforts related to health care, nursing education, nursing research and nursing as a profession.
- MFP fellows presented research from their dissertations.
- MFP fellows toured the National Archives, Capitol building & the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington D.C. followed by a discussion on AI historical trauma.

This summer institute was extremely informative as I learned about the legislative process. I was unaware of all of the supportive efforts that ANA provides to the nursing profession. I am glad to be a member of ANA and have a better understanding of how the organization supports nurses across the country.

Bridgette M. Brawner

4th Annual ISI Convener Report

With each passing year the Annual Intensive Summer Institutes (ISI) convened by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) Minority Fellowship Program (MFP) at the American Nurses Association (ANA) continue to surpass participants' expectations. This year the group held its 4th Annual (ISI) July 19 – 22, 2007 at the Courtyard Marriott in Silver Springs, MD. From the moment they arrived up until it was time to depart for the airport, fellows were afforded educational and networking opportunities to foster their development as independent investigators and future nurse leaders. This summer's institute was comprised of a distinctive mix of activities ranging from traditional lectures to local group excursions. The knowledge and skills gained during the ISI enabled fellows to:

1. Discuss the critical roles and responsibilities of selected mental health and substance abuse agencies from a national perspective and the importance of networking;
2. Discuss the essential contributions of congress persons and their staff in advancing science and supporting substance abuse, mental health and ethnic minority health;
3. Understand and appreciate the contributions at SAMHSA;
4. Demonstrate familiarity with AMOS;
5. Gain a pithy sense of appreciation for and understanding of the history and current health status of Alaska Natives and American Indians through the medium of the American Indian Museum;
6. Appreciate the research and contributions of Fellow colleagues.

The institute opened with a networking session with special invited guests, and fellows had an opportunity to meet the ANA staff responsible for the day to day operations of the Program; Dr. Garth Graham made an extra effort to talk to fellows about health disparities and the importance of publishing between work and rushing to catch his flight. In the absence of one of the scheduled speakers, Dr. Gladys Gary Vaughn, sister of Executive Program Consultant/Director of the SAMHSA MFP, Dr.

Bridgette M. Brawner

Faye A. Gary, EdD, RN, FAAN, offered a motivational and encouraging talk on being involved in organizations and executive boards to ensure that our voices are heard.

Fellows had the opportunity to make their mark on Capitol Hill through visiting with their elected congress persons and/or their staff, and used this time to provide the legislators with information related to mental health, substance abuse, ethnic minority health, and the MFP. Dr. Kyu Rhee, chief medical officer for Baltimore Medical System, provided a stimulating and informative presentation on the impact of Community Health Centers on the health and wellbeing of the most vulnerable populations. Likely one of the most heartfelt MFP experiences to date, the group took an excursion to the American Indian Museum and had an opportunity to learn details about American Indian history that could never be captured in any text book.

After the museum everyone trekked over to the Library of Congress and was amazed by the breadth of information housed within the walls of the facility. The outstanding Dr. Hossein Yarandi stimulated fellows minds by breaking down the seemingly impenetrable wall between researchers and AMOS and path analysis; fellows left the intensive sessions with an understanding of recursive and nonrecursive models, and some are even considering using structural equation modeling for their dissertations. Another appealing component of the institute was presentations conducted by fellows (recent graduates and current doctoral candidates) on their individual research projects.

The opportunities for growth and development were endless. The overall sentiment of everyone who participated was that this year's ISI was the best institute thus far, and each fellow walked away with the tools and motivation needed to continue on their journey to becoming sought after pioneers in the fields of mental health, substance abuse, and ethnic minority health. The MFP continues to afford its fellows with invaluable, incomparable experiences that distinguish the program into a class of its own!

Brandon N. Thomas
July, 2007

SAMHSA/ANA MFP ISI

The ISI in Washington, D.C. was one of the best institutes that I have experienced as an MFP fellow. I really enjoyed how this institute was a continuation of the winter institute in Seattle, WA, in that both were focused on using research to influence policy and the state and national levels. What was reinforced in both institutes is that “we” the researchers and practitioners are really the experts on many of the health related concerns that plague our cities and states. It is up to us to do good work and research as a means to inform the politicians or become actively involved in organizations that affect the policies under which many of us practice.

The D.C. institute was a very good mixture of information gathering, education, networking, and reflecting. I personally received an abundance of information about the American Nurses Association’s (ANA) advocacy work that they do on behalf of the nursing profession on Capital Hill. I was astounded by how important it is to become involved and to have a voice about an issue; not simply for the sake of having something to say, but to inform the congressional body of the important information and details that they themselves may lack. As a result, I have more respect for what the ANA does on behalf of nurses in addition to what ANA does on behalf of the public.

One of the main proponents of the intensive institutes is for us to continue our education by learning and implementing statistical methods into our research to provide us with the edge that we may need to be competitive or cost-effective, depending on the perspective. Learning about structural equation modeling (SEM) was a treat and a highlight for me. I liked this methodology because I have a theory about how my research concepts fit together and now I have something to help me test it statistically. I do understand that although the model may not be statistically significant, it may be clinically; and for many populations that we work with, clinical significance can make a difference.

Brandon N. Thomas
July, 2007

A newer component of the institute that I really enjoyed that relates to the education component was the opportunity for other fellows to present their research at the institute. It was very inspiring to see the work that the other fellows were doing in their respective doctoral programs, in addition to witnessing their excitement about the work they had accomplished. It was very infectious and inspiring. I heard that it was very overwhelming for some of the “new” fellows, who had never attended an institute prior to this. It is especially when we are struggling to survive in our own corners of the world. The comforting note about this realization, is that they were encouraged by many of presenters and by non-presenters, that we all have been where they are and will develop that poise and elegance that each presenter displayed by participating in the fellowship.

Our opportunity to network during this institute came as a result of not having long and extended work days. It was great to be able to have enough energy at the end of the day to talk to the new fellows and really get to know them and not simply their interests or dissertation titles. The location of the hotel at the institute, in my opinion, helped to facilitate some of the networking as well. Having the hotel located in an area that was close to other attractions and things to do, decreased the need to be so professional and to have on your best socks. It was nice to be able to relax and wear the ones with the holes in them if you needed to. The benefit was that I learned so much more about the fellows, things that I would never have known, had we not had that opportunity and time to do so.

Finally, this institute has a component of reflection. The obvious were the summaries that the conveners presented at the conclusion of a session; however the most memorable and life changing reflections for me were the reflection of our experiences on Capital Hill and our shares after touring the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI). We had some wonderful shares of our experiences and our history. I have to admit that I was pretty scared to speak to someone on Capital Hill and was silently griping about it when I found out. I kept saying to myself, “why did they choose me? I have no clue how to approach them or speak the required information succinctly...” The list of why I couldn’t do it, just went on and on. However, on the way to the Hill, I just had a few silent words

Brandon N. Thomas
July, 2007

with myself and reviewed the mental health parity bill, and accepted the task that lay before me.

Again, I was nervous at the start of the conversation with Congressman Kucinich's senior legislative assistant, Vic Edgerton. We conversed with one another as if we had spoken previously. The best part was Vic also had his MPH, so we had very similar interests and concerns about the health of the public. As a result, I gained more respect for Congressman Kucinich for having a person on his staff that possessed such knowledge and was utilizing it to help influence policy in his own right.

The NMAI was a great experience as well. I had the opportunity to learn more information about some of the fellows experience and history as it relates to being at one time or another, and in some form or another, an oppressed people. It was very difficult to hear many of the commentaries provided by the fellows; however, the emotion behind what was being said was very loud. I personally walked away from the experience with a reassurance that the more we think we are different and have not had similar experiences on our life journey, the more we find out that we are the same. To find out, all it took was the start of a conversation.

I hope to continue to have many more conversations with the Fellows about a variety of topics for years to come. Thank you for the opportunity.

Cheryl Woods Giscombe
August 13, 2007

2007 MFP ISI

Overall, the ISI was wonderful! I gained a lot from being able to speak with the other fellows about their current research and professional activities. It was great to speak with researchers who all are committed to mental health and substance abuse research. Although we all share a broad interest, I was particularly excited to learn about the diversity of research approaches used by the MFP fellows and the diversity in populations studied.

The guest speakers at dinner were all wonderful. The experience broadened my horizons about what needs to be done to eliminate health disparities related to mental health and substance abuse. I also learned a lot about my own potential as a researcher and the ways in which my research can influence policy.

The Structural Equation Modeling workshop was also valuable. I used SEM in graduate school, and in my dissertation research particularly.

However, I was still able to learn a great deal at the ISI. There is always more to learn when working with AMOS.

I really can't say what I would do to make the ISI better next time. I gained a lot from the experience, including learning about various perspectives of researchers from diverse ethnic groups.

The Institute, including our various field trips (Native American Museum, U.S. Capitol), provoked emotions that inspire me to continue to pursue my goals of becoming a faculty member and researcher who focuses on addressing the mental health needs of African American women and African American families in general. I realize even more that historical, political, and economic struggles of African Americans make a significant contribution to the current mental and physical health conditions of this group.

Cheryl Woods Giscombe
August 13, 2007

I cannot say how much I was inspired by you (Dr. Gary) and the MFP fellows. The ambition, intelligence, and positive energy were infectious. It is an honor to be a part of this group.

I look forward to future Institutes, and appreciate the opportunity to be in the Minority Fellowship Program.